

HOUSE COMMITTEE
ON
Agriculture

Senate Bill 322

Testimony of Donna Rise
Pest Management Bureau Chief
Montana Department of Agriculture

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

Good afternoon, for the record, my name is Donna Rise, Pest Management Bureau Chief for the Montana Department of Agriculture. I am here to testify in support of Senate Bill 322.

The benefits of bee keeping can be seen in the pollination of the plants that produce our food and fiber. Montana honey production ranks fifth nationally. In 2007, 200,000 colonies of bees produced 15 million pounds of honey valued at \$15 million dollars. This represents the tenth largest source of agricultural income in Montana.

Montana bee keepers are very serious about maintaining a healthy apiary industry. They have always been actively involved in the apiary program, including its regulations and rules. This bill represents the culmination of two years of diligent, hard work. During the past two years the industry and department have reviewed each section, each line, and each word of the apiary statute. The industry is seeking changes that eliminate redundancy and provide greater clarity and transparency, as may be noted in the reorganization of the statute. Changes include updates on terminology, current accepted practices, and business processes. During the evaluation, the department's apiary responsibilities and services were reviewed and compared against the statute. As a result, updates and the addition of new services designed to support and preserve apiary health are being sought. These updates will facilitate the timely and efficient implementation of program activities and maximize the use of revenue generated from self imposed fees.

The health of the apiary industry goes beyond honey production and pollination. It translates into the health and vitality of our plant communities and ecosystems. The department stands in support of this bill and respectfully requests your support of Senate Bill 322.